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Dec 65

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director, Intelligence

SUBJECT: The Various Estimates of North Vietnamese Logistic Capabilities and Logistic Requirements to Support Military Activities in South Vietnam

1. CIA and DIA have over the past several months been unable to reach agreement on the logistic requirements for the Communist main forces in South Vietnam. At the current OB the CIA estimate has been about 6 tons per day and the DIA estimate has been about 20 tons per day. The differences in the two estimates have been consistent over time and arise from three basic causes:

a. DIA inclusion of a Class I (Food) requirement for porters and infiltrators, and for PAVN forces; this requirement is not carried in CIA estimates.

b. DIA inclusion of a Class III (POL) requirement for PAVN forces which is not included in CIA estimates.

c. A general attribution by DIA of a logistic requirement for PAVN forces which is roughly 9 times the requirement for Viet Cong forces on a pound per man per day basis. CIA has tended to give PAVN and Viet Cong forces approximately the same requirements.

2. Both the CIA and DIA estimates have been dwarfed by the current MACV estimate of 84 tons per day as presented in a recent briefing to Secretary McNamara (see the attachment). Much of this estimate has been incorporated into the current memorandum to the President from Secretary McNamara.

3. DIA has apparently been able to give a general acceptance to the MACV estimates. Since we have not seen the input data for the MACV estimate we are neither able to refute or accept it. We can, however, make some general observations on the MACV estimates:

A. Capabilities

The McNamara memorandum estimates, that even taking interdiction into account, the theoretical capacity of the land and sea infiltration routes is 200 tons per day. The MACV estimate per roads and trails through the Laotian Panhandle is 195 tons per day on an average annual basis. We estimate that the Mu Gia Pass has an interdicted capacity of 100 tons per day. The newly reported Mu Gia bypass and the improved infiltration routes around the DMZ probably give enough additional capacity that a figure of 200 tons is not patently unacceptable. The extension of motorable roads south to Route 165 and the construction of new roads (Rte 911) and trail systems in southern Laos make it theoretically possible to distribute this flow of materials.

B. Requirements

The MACV estimate of current requirements is in the range of 75-85 tons. This is apparently for the 110 battalions now in South Vietnam at present levels of fighting. By extrapolation more than 150 battalions with a requirement of 100-110 tons a day at present levels of fighting could be supported by the infiltration system.

We are unable to reconstruct the MACV estimate. The version available to us in some cases appears to be in error in its arithmetic calculations. The major departure of MACV from the CIA and DIA estimates appears to be in the requirement for ammunition (Class V). For example the MACV briefing paper indicates a daily expenditure of ammunition that exceeds by 10 times the estimates previously held by CIA and DIA. Although DIA is now willing to accept the MACV figure we are unable to judge its accuracy. To the extent the expenditure of ammunition is overstated an even greater number of battalions could be supported.

We are also, with the data available to us, unable to rationalize the considerably higher logistic requirement for PAVN forces as opposed to VC forces.

In summary we can live with the capability estimate. With armed reconnaissance the capability estimates in the McNamara memorandum should be reduced but not to the point where the requirement cannot be satisfied. This will be even more likely if resort is made to sea infiltration. We are unable to refute or accept the requirements estimate until we know how it was calculated and the input factor used. We are attempting to obtain from DIA a detailed recapitulation of the MACV methodology and estimate.

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Attachment:
MACV cables